# Research Report

Newspaper Readership Project

Newspaper Advertising Bureau, Inc. 485 Lexington Avenue, New York, New York 10017

# MEETING READERS' MULTIPLE NEEDS:

## Content and Readership of News and Features in the Daily Press

This study is one of a series of research studies conducted under the auspices of the Newspaper Readership Project, an industry-wide effort to promote circulation and readership.

March 1984

NATIONAL STUDY OF THE DAILY NEWSPAPER AND ITS AUDIENCES

## PREFACE

In May 1982, the Newspaper Advertising Bureau designed and carried out a nationwide survey of the readership of daily newspapers. The field work was conducted by Audits & Surveys, Inc. with a probability sample of adults in 1,979 households. The questionnaires used in the interview covered a wide range of topics: newspaper reading, television viewing, exposure to news media, readers' content preferences, ratings of the performance of the daily paper, circulation patterns, and detailed demographic information.

As part of the interview, newspaper readers were also taken through a copy of the paper they read yesterday, or the one they usually read, and asked about their readership of or interest in specific editorial and advertising items on sampled pages in that paper. These items were coded in several ways: size, use of text or illustrations, location in the paper, etc.

The results of this survey are presented in a series of detailed reports dealing with circulation issues, news habits of the American public, page traffic and ad readership, attitudes about the performance of the daily press, and the content and readership of news and features. A separate technical report on the survey, prepared by Audits & Surveys, Inc., that contains copies of the questionnaires used in the study is also available.

This study was sponsored by the Newspaper Readership Project and carried out by NAB's Research Department. Charles Lehman was the author of this report.

This report examines the editorial content of daily newspapers in the United States and the ways in which people go about their reading. Individual chapters that highlight different aspects of these topics also draw on different sample bases:

Chapter I summarizes the content of a hypothetical "average" newspaper on an average weekday. It is based on a content analysis of all editorial items of five column inches or more on sampled pages exposed to qualified yesterday readers and non-readers. The overall distribution of content categories shown in Chapter I tables is weighted to compensate for page sampling procedures, which specified that sampled pages should always include the front and back pages.

Chapter II is a discussion of newspaper reading habits and the degree to which general categories of editorial and advertising content are likely to appeal to various demographic segments. The principal bases cited are "qualified yesterday readers," who represent 1,288 respondents, and "total newspaper readers," who account for 1,803 respondents.

Chapters III and IV focus on reported readership of editorial items. Here the base becomes items rather than people, specifically the 36,869 items of five column inches or more on sampled pages opened by qualified yesterday readers.

CONTENTS


| | Page |
|---|---|
| PREFACE | iii |
| LIST OF TABLES | xi |
| HIGHLIGHTS | xv |
| DETAILED FINDINGS | |
| I. WHAT'S IN THE DAILY NEWSPAPER? | 1 |
| A National Analysis of Newspaper Content | 1 |
| Content of Smaller Editorial Items | 7 |
| Hard News Dominates Front Pages | 9 |
| What Was In the Headlines During the Survey Period? | 12 |
| Chapter Summary | 14 |
| II. IN THE INFORMATION SUPERMARKET: HOW PEOPLE READ | 15 |
| Younger and Older Readers Have Different Interests | 24 |
| Education Affects Reading Patterns | 26 |
| The Combined Effects of Age and Education | 28 |
| Frequent and Infrequent Readers Have Similar Interests...But | 30 |
| How Much Do They Care About the Things They Read? | 32 |
| Chapter Summary | 34 |
| III. THE READING OF EDITORIAL ITEMS IN YESTERDAY'S NEWSPAPER | 35 |
| Pitfalls in Measuring Item Readership | 35 |
| Overall Figures on Item Readership | 37 |
| Interest in Editorial Items Among Yesterday Non-Readers | 39 |
| How Do Reader Characteristics Affect Readership? | 40 |
| Chapter Summary | 45 |
| IV. HOW DO NEWSPAPER FACTORS AFFECT ITEM READERSHIP? | 47 |
| Are Items In Fatter Newspapers Better Read? | 47 |
| Do Fatter Newspapers Offer More Hard News? | 49 |
| --And Larger and Small Papers Have Different Readers | 50 |
| Item Readership in Morning, Evening and All-Day Editions | 51 |
| Front-page Items Are the Best Read | 52 |
| In This Case, Bigger Is Better | 53 |
| Yes, Pictures Do Increase Readership | 54 |
| Are Right-hand Pages Better Read? | 55 |
| Chapter Summary | 56 |

CONTENTS (continued)


| APPENDIX | Page |
|---|---|
| Appendix Exhibit 1 | 57 |
| Table 1 | |
| Content of Editorial Items, by Size of Item | 61 |
| Table 2 | |
| Kinds of Newspaper Items "Usually Read," by Race | 62 |
| Table 3 | |
| Kinds of Newspaper Items "Usually Read," by Household Income | 63 |
| Table 4 | |
| Kinds of Newspaper Items "Usually Read," by Education within Sex | 64 |
| Table 5 | |
| Interest in Sampled Editorial Items Among Yesterday Non-Readers | 65 |
| Table 6 | |
| Composition of Frequent Reader, Infrequent Reader and Non-Reader Groups | 66 |
| Table 7 | |
| Composition of AM, PM and All-Day Newspaper Audiences | 67 |
| Table 8 | |
| Bases for All Newspaper Readers--Unweighted | 68 |

LIST OF TABLES


| | | Page |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Editorial Content of Sampled Pages in Three Survey Years (number of items)..... | 2 |
| 2. | Distribution of Editorial Items, by Size and Content..... | 4 |
| 3. | Distribution of Editorial Content Weighted by Median Size of Item..... | 6 |
| 4. | Content of Larger and Smaller Editorial Items..... | 8 |
| 5. | Percentage of All Editorial Items Classified As International, National, State and Local Items, by Location in Paper..... | 10 |
| 6. | Percentage of All Editorial Items Classified As General Interest, Amusements and Professional Sports, by Location in Paper..... | 11 |
| 7. | How Yesterday Readers Report Going Through the Paper Versus Percent Opening Average Page..... | 16 |
| 8. | Average Page Opening and Percent of Items Read on Opened Pages, by Number of Pages in Newspaper..... | 18 |
| 9. | Mean Number of Pages in Newspaper Read and Minutes Spent Reading, by Size of Metropolitan Area..... | 19 |
| 10. | Average (Mean) Number of Editorial And Advertising Items "Usually Read" (out of 25 listed)..... | 21 |
| 11. | Kinds of Newspaper Items "Usually Read," by Sex..... | 23 |
| 12. | Kinds of Newspaper Items "Usually Read," by Age..... | 25 |
| 13. | Kinds of Newspaper Items "Usually Read," by Education..... | 27 |
| 14. | Kinds of Newspaper Items "Usually Read," by Education within Age..... | 29 |
| 15. | Kinds of Newspaper Items "Usually Read," by Frequency of Newspaper Reading..... | 31 |
| 16. | "Intensity of Appeal" of Newspaper Items, by Sex..... | 33 |

LIST OF TABLES (continued)


Page

17. Mean Number of Pages in Newspapers Read by Qualified Yesterday Readers, by Selected Variables..... 36

18. Percent of Editorial Items Read on Opened Pages, by Sex..... 38

19. Percent of Editorial Items Read on Opened Pages, by Demographics..... 43

20. Percent of Editorial Items Read on Opened Pages, by Number of Pages in Newspaper..... 48

21. Composition of Editorial Items on Opened Pages, by Size of Paper..... 49

22. Education and Residence of Qualified Yesterday Readers, by Size of Paper..... 50

23. Percent of Editorial Items Read on Opened Pages, by Publishing Cycle..... 51

24. Percent of Editorial Items Read on Opened Pages, by Position in Paper..... 52

25. Percent of Editorial Items Read on Opened Pages, by Size of Item..... 53

26. Percent of Editorial Items Read on Opened Pages, by Graphic Treatment..... 54

27. Percent of Editorial Items Read on Opened Pages: Right- versus Left-hand Pages..... 55

Exhibit 1

Some Major Stories Appearing During Survey Period..... 13

# HIGHLIGHTS

## Content of the Daily Newspaper

National samples of weekday newspapers drawn in 1971, 1977, and 1982 indicate that the editorial content mix has remained fairly constant during this period.

In all three survey years, five classifications account for roughly 60% of all editorial items. These are: economic news, government actions, sports, amusements, and other general interest.

Over the eleven-year period a slight trend can been seen toward more local coverage, a higher ratio of features to news, and more sports and business coverage.

## Dynamics of Newspaper Reading

High page-opening figures and reports by two thirds of all yesterday readers that they went through the paper "page by page" suggest that many people who "browse" the newspaper may not know which editorial items and ads they will find relevant until they come across them. Regardless of cost, electronic media may not be able to offer readers the same advantages as the printed page.

A card-sorting task indicates that roughly 15 out of 25 specific kinds of editorial content and advertising have some appeal for an average reader. The mass-audience appeal of the newspaper depends on news of the local community, the nation and the world, but large segments also "read or look at" features and advertising.

Half (50%) of the men who "usually read" professional sports items say that this is one of the three things in the paper they care about the most. The highest-ranked item for women readers is "news about the local community," cited by 39% of those reading.

Editorial Items Read on Opened Pages

Taking each reader through a copy of the newspaper read yesterday in order to determine which sampled pages were opened and which items were read on those pages yields a more objective measure of reading. Overall, 35% of all editorial items[1] on opened pages are reported as read.

Average item readership figures are virtually identical for men and women but differ considerably for individual content categories. Average item readership tends to be slightly higher among college graduates, adults over 25 years of age, and metropolitan residents.

The percentage of editorial items read on opened pages varies with newspaper factors as well as reader characteristics. Among the factors that tend to increase item readership are: front page position, larger amount of space, and presence of an illustration. The percentage of items read on opened pages also tends to be higher for fat newspapers than for thin newspapers. The text of the report suggests several possible reasons for this unexpected finding.

[1] Interviewing was confined to items of five column inches or more.

# DETAILED FINDINGS

# I. WHAT'S IN THE DAILY NEWSPAPER?

## A National Analysis of Newspaper Content

Although daily newspapers throughout the United States share certain characteristics, each newspaper is a unique publication reflecting particular editorial policies and local conditions. No national overview of newspaper content can do justice to this uniqueness, but national surveys of content serve as useful benchmarks that may detect journalistic trends over time.

Similar national newspaper readership surveys conducted in 1971, 1977 and 1982 included a detailed analysis of the editorial content of selected pages in daily newspapers. The basic purpose of the selection and weighting procedures used[1] was to make these representative of all newspaper pages in circulation, excluding those on spreads that consist entirely of classified advertising. Measurements taken on the entire base of sampled pages were limited to items of five column inches or more.

Table 1 shows the distribution of editorial items found in the three surveys, based on all items of five column inches or more. Compared with the results of the two earlier surveys, the 1982 figures generally show more similarities than differences. Those differences that do appear, such as a drop in the number of items about "government actions," may reflect the news stories breaking at a particular time, rather than a genuine trend.

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[1] See the "Technical Appendix" prepared by Audits & Surveys, Inc. for details on the conduct of this survey.

Table 1

Editorial Content of Sampled Pages in Three Survey Years*
(number of items)

| | 1982 | 1977 | 1971 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Total items | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |
| Economic news, actions & policies | 11.6% | 9.2% | 9.4% |
| Environment, resources, population, energy | 1.6 | 2.2 | 1.5 |
| Government actions (U.S. & foreign) | 7.1 | 12.6 | 14.3 |
| Wars, rebellions, defense activity | 4.2 | 1.4 | 6.8 |
| Crime | 5.9 | 6.9 | 3.7 |
| Professional sports | 11.3 | 13.1 | 13.4 |
| Other sports | 4.2 | | |
| Editorials, unsigned♦ | 2.1 | NA | NA |
| Editorial cartoons | 1.3 | 0.9 | NA |
| Other editorial page content◇ | 4.1 | 2.2 | 1.6 |
| Education, child care | 4.0 | 2.9 | 3.1 |
| Cultural events, arts, reviews | 2.6 | 2.2 | 2.4 |
| Other amusements● | 14.2 | 12.9 | 12.5 |
| Personal advice columns | 1.6 | 1.6 | 2.9 |
| Other general interest○ | 15.4 | 10.4 | 11.0 |
| Health, welfare, social issues | 3.8 | 4.7 | 5.4 |
| General local news★ | NA | 6.9 | 6.9 |
| News summaries, briefs, index | 1.4 | 2.2 | NA |
| All other content☆ | 3.6 | 7.7 | 5.1 |
| International news items | 6.0% | 6.3% | 10.2% |
| National news items | 4.8 | 3.5 | 6.9 |
| State & local news items | 14.0 | 12.4 | 12.7 |

*All editorial items of five column inches or more=100%.
♦In 1971 and 1977, unsigned editorials were classified by content (i.e., education, government actions, etc.).
◇Includes letters to the editor and political columns that may or may not appear on the editorial page itself.
●Includes comics, puzzles, horoscopes, radio & TV listings.
○Includes food, home, society, obituaries & gossip columns.
★In 1982, general local news items were classified by content (economic news, other sports, etc.).
☆Includes all other content not classified elsewhere (science, inventions, disasters, religion, etc.).

Any conclusions about the degree of change or stability revealed in Table 1 should be heavily qualified. Most of the content categories listed are broadly defined, so there could be shifts within a category that would not affect these figures. Another hidden change might involve shifts from a regular "standing" feature or column to news treatments of the same subjects appearing at irregular intervals.

Even in the case of the more precise content labels there may be problems in assessing changes. For example, one recent analysis of changes in the content of a popular advice column suggests that newspaper readers of 1955 might have been shocked by the kinds of advice being dispensed today.[1]

Qualifications aside, the 1982 figures suggest an increased emphasis on local news coverage. This would be consistent with a 1983 mail survey[2] in which 38% of the dailies responding say that since 1979 they have increased the ratio of local and state coverage to national and international coverage. (Only 8% report moving in the opposite direction.) Also, 21% say that they have increased the ratio of features to hard news, while only 10% have made the reverse move. Four out of ten dailies (40%) say that they have increased sports coverage.

Any analysis of editorial content based on the number of items is incomplete without some attention to space. Table 1 indicates that items like comics, puzzles, horoscopes and TV listings represent more than 14% of all editorial items, but Table 2 shows that 76% of these "other amusements" items are less than ten column inches.[3]

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[1]Charlotte Hays, "The Evolution of Ann Landers: From Prim to Progressive," Public Opinion, December/January 1984, pp 11-13.

[2]See "1983 Newspaper Inventory: Summary Tables for Weekday Editions," Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1983.

[3]Appendix Table 1 shows the same data percentaged in the opposite direction (i.e., the percent of items under 10" classified as "other amusements.")

Table 2

Distribution of Editorial Items, by Size and Content*
(1982)

| | 5-9+ Inches | 10-19+ Inches | 20+ Inches |
|---|---|---|---|
| Total Items | 38% | 37% | 25% |
| Economic news, actions & policies | 30% | 43% | 27% |
| Environment, resources, population, energy | 33 | 45 | 22 |
| Government actions (U.S. & foreign) | 33 | 48 | 19 |
| Wars, rebellions, defense activity | 25 | 41 | 34 |
| Crime | 41 | 44 | 15 |
| Professional sports | 32 | 36 | 32 |
| Other sports | 37 | 37 | 26 |
| Editorials, unsigned | 26 | 55 | 19 |
| Editorial cartoons | 19 | 63 | 18 |
| Other editorial page content♦ | 13 | 29 | 58 |
| Education, child care | 34 | 39 | 27 |
| Cultural events, arts, reviews | 26 | 37 | 37 |
| Other amusements | 76 | 16 | 8 |
| Personal advice columns | 10 | 57 | 33 |
| Other general interest | 38 | 34 | 28 |
| Health, welfare, social issues | 32 | 43 | 25 |
| News summaries, briefs, index | 44 | 39 | 17 |
| All other content | 40 | 39 | 21 |
| International news items | 28% | 42% | 30% |
| National news items | 28 | 53 | 19 |
| State & local news items | 32 | 43 | 25 |

*Percentages should be read across. (Table shows that 38% of all items on sampled pages are at least five but less than ten column inches, etc.) News stories may have been longer: "jumps" were not measured unless they appeared on sampled pages.

♦All "Letters to the Editor" were measured as a single block of items.

Table 3 shows the effect of item size more clearly.[1] This table details the median size of items in each of the editorial content classifications and the distribution of content weighted by space.

The classification showing the most striking difference from the median size of the average item (13.2 column inches) is "other amusements," which is comprised mainly of comic strips. The median size for this classification is only 6.6 column inches, with the result that even though "other amusements" represents over 14% of all items, it accounts for only 7% of the space given to measured items of editorial content.

The typical size of items in almost all of the remaining content classifications tends to be larger than the "average" editorial item. The item classification generally largest in size is "other editorial page content," with a median of 21.4 column inches. This classification would be much closer to the overall average if "letters to the editor" were excluded. (Each block of "letters" was measured as a single item.)

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[1]Note that Table 3 and these remarks refer only to editorial items of five column inches or more.

Table 3

Distribution of Editorial Content Weighted by Median Size of Item*
(1982)

| | Percent of All Items | Median Size in Inches | Percent Weighted by Size |
|---|---|---|---|
| Total Items | 100.0% | 13.2 | 100.0% |
| Economic news, actions, & policies | 11.6% | 14.2 | 12.7% |
| Enviornment, resources, population, energy | 1.6 | 13.8 | 1.7 |
| Government actions (U.S. & foreign) | 7.1 | 13.5 | 7.2 |
| Wars, rebellions, defense activity | 4.2 | 16.1 | 5.1 |
| Crime | 5.9 | 12.0 | 5.3 |
| Professional sports | 11.3 | 15.0 | 12.7 |
| Other sports | 4.2 | 13.5 | 4.3 |
| Editorials, unsigned | 2.1 | 14.4 | 2.3 |
| Editorial cartoons | 1.3 | 14.9 | 1.5 |
| Other editorial page content♦ | 4.1 | 21.4 | 6.6 |
| Education, child care | 4.0 | 14.1 | 4.2 |
| Cultural events, arts, reviews | 2.6 | 16.5 | 3.2 |
| Other amusements | 14.2 | 6.6 | 7.0 |
| Personal advice columns | 1.6 | 17.0 | 2.0 |
| Other general interest | 15.4 | 13.5 | 15.5 |
| Health, welfare, social issues | 3.8 | 14.2 | 4.1 |
| News summaries, briefs, index | 1.4 | 11.5 | 1.2 |
| All other content | 3.6 | 12.6 | 3.4 |
| International news items | 6.0% | 15.2 | 6.8% |
| National news items | 4.8 | 14.2 | 5.1 |
| State & local news items | 14.0 | 14.2 | 14.9 |

*All items of five column inches or more=100%.
♦Each block of "Letters to the Editor" tallied as a single item.

Content of Smaller Editorial Items

In this study newspaper pages were sampled primarily to measure page opening and the reading of editorial items, not simply to describe the content of the newspaper. For this reason, the research design specified that only items of five column inches or more should be checked. This limitation was imposed in order to avoid tiring or irritating respondents as they went through items on sampled pages.

In view of this restriction on the size of items, a subsample of 144 newspapers was used to check the distribution of content of editorial items under five column inches. As Table 4 shows, the incidence of various kinds of content found in these very small editorial items is quite similar to that found in large items. Certain service features or other items of general interest appear more frequently among these small-space items, as do economic news briefs.

Table 4

Content of Larger and Smaller Editorial Items

| | 5 Col. Inches & Over | Under 5 Col. Inches† |
|---|---|---|
| Total Items | 100.0% | 100.0% |
| Economic news, actions & policies | 11.6% | 13.8% |
| Environment, resources, population, energy | 1.6 | 1.5 |
| Government actions (U.S. & foreign) | 7.1 | 7.5 |
| Wars, rebellions, defense activity | 4.2 | 3.5 |
| Crime | 5.9 | 6.9 |
| Professional sports | 11.3 | 9.0 |
| Other sports | 4.2 | 4.4 |
| Editorials, unsigned | 2.1 | 1.5 |
| Editorial cartoons | 1.3 | 0.7 |
| Other editorial page content♦ | 4.1 | 3.1 |
| Education, child care | 4.0 | 5.6 |
| Cultural events, arts, reviews | 2.6 | 2.9 |
| Other amusements◇ | 14.2 | 10.9 |
| Personal advice | 1.6 | 1.2 |
| Other general interest● | 15.4 | 18.3 |
| Health, welfare, social issues | 3.8 | 3.5 |
| News summaries, briefs, index | 1.4 | 1.5 |
| All other content○ | 3.6 | 4.2 |
| International news items | 6.0% | 5.6% |
| National news items | 4.8 | 4.0 |
| State & local news items | 14.0 | 17.4 |

†Data on items under five column inches are based on Subsample B of the survey. (See "Technical Appendix" for details.)
♦Includes letters to the editor and political columns that may or may not appear on the editorial page itself.
◇Includes comics, puzzles, horoscopes, radio & TV listings.
●Includes food, home, society, obituaries & gossip columns.
○All other content not classified elsewhere (science, inventions, accidents & disasters, religion, etc.)

Hard News Dominates Front Pages

It is difficult for any classification scheme, no matter how elaborate, to specify the exact amount of "hard news" in a daily newspaper. Unsigned editorials and political columns, for example, are considered "opinion" or "commentary," but these can sometimes include hard news not found elsewhere in the paper.

In this 1982 survey, 25% of all editorial items over five column inches were categorized as national, international, or state and local news items. These dealt with topics such as war, government actions, education, labor, etc. These three composite headings represent roughly half of the total hard news content.[1]

The broad category of "general interest" includes both features and a few kinds of news items, mostly local. At one time a large proportion of these items would have been called "women's interest" items, but in our rapidly changing society male readers may also be interested in food, home furnishings and similar topics. The general interest category also includes weather maps and forecasts, human interest stories, personal advice columns and obituaries. (Editorial page content and the "amusements" category, shown separately here, can also be considered general interest material.)

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[1] Some hard news items about labor, taxation, transportation, the environment, etc. are organized on a regional level, or refer to both local and national conditions within the same article. (For detailed content categories, see Appendix Exhibit 1.)

As Table 5 shows, items classified as international, national, or state and local news figure more prominently near the front part of the newspaper. On the front page itself, 55% of all items fall into one of these three classifications, as compared with only 16% of the items on the fourth interior spread.[1]

Table 5

Percentage of All Editorial Items Classified As International, National, State and Local Items, by Location in Paper

| | All Three Categories | International | National | State & Local |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total Items | 25% | 6% | 5% | 14% |
| Front page | 55% | 23% | 11% | 21% |
| First interior spread | 30 | 9 | 7 | 14 |
| Second interior spread | 23 | 6 | 5 | 12 |
| Third interior spread | 21 | 4 | 4 | 13 |
| Fourth interior spread | 16 | 2 | 2 | 12 |

NOTE: Percentages to be read across. That is, "international" items represent 6% of total items but 23% of items on the front page, etc.

[1] "Fourth interior spread" does not necessarily denote pages 8 and 9. Each respondent was interviewed on the first and last page of the newspaper and on four randomly selected interior spreads. (If one of the specified pages was the first page of a section, the respondent was also interviewed about the back page of the same section.) The position of a spread (first to fourth) is best defined in terms of its proximity to the front page.

Conversely, soft news items and features tend to be found further back in the newspaper. As Table 6 shows, for example, "amusements" represents 14% of all items of five column inches or more, but only 1% of the items on the front page. "General interest" items are more likely to appear on interior spreads than on the front page but tend to appear closer to the front of the paper than either amusements or professional sports items.

Table 6

Percentage of All Editorial Items Classified as General Interest, Amusements and Professional Sports, by Location in Paper

| | General Interest† | Amusements‡ | Professional Sports |
|---|---|---|---|
| Total Items | 15% | 14% | 11% |
| Front page | 10% | 1% | 1% |
| First interior spread | 18 | 9 | 2 |
| Second interior spread | 17 | 12 | 9 |
| Third interior spread | 13 | 17 | 18 |
| Fourth interior spread | 11 | 28 | 19 |

NOTE: Percentages to be read across. That is, "general interest" items represent 15% of all items but only 10% of the items on the front page, etc.

†Includes weather map, food, home, society, obituaries, gossip columns, etc.
‡Includes comics, puzzles, horoscopes, radio & TV listings.

What Was In the Headlines During the Survey Period?

The very nature of news is such that a newspaper's relative emphasis on local, state, national and international coverage can show short-term or day-to-day differences as well as long-range trends. Table 5 indicates that during the survey period the front page of a typical daily newspaper carried roughly half as many "national" items as "international" or "state and local" items. Because of the particular news stories breaking at the time of the survey, this pattern cannot be taken as representative of other periods during 1982.

Exhibit 1, which details some of the major national and international stories appearing during the survey period, shows that the Falkland Island crisis was a running news story for the entire two-week period.[1] This single fact largely accounts for the dominance of "international" over "national" front-page items. At other times--for instance, in October editions during a Presidential election year--the reverse pattern might well apply.

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[1]Half of all respondents (50%) named the Falkland Island crisis as the biggest news story they had found out about "yesterday" or "today." No other story was mentioned by as much as 5% of the sample.

Exhibit 1

Some Major Stories Appearing During Survey Period

5/17/82 Falkland Islands: British warplanes attack 2 Argentine ships.
Palestinian self-rule talks expected to resume.

5/18/82 U.N. talks resume in Falkland crisis.
Supreme Court: anti-bias rules cover school employees as well as pupils.

5/19/82 Brezhnev affirms readiness to talk on strategic arms.
Drysdale Securities defaults on debt.

5/20/82 U.N. chief appeals for time to gain Falkland accord.
Corporate profits off 17.5% for first quarter.
Begin narrowly survives no-confidence vote.

5/21/82 British quit Falkland talks; authorize attack.
Senate turns back efforts to modify 1983 tax cuts.

5/24/82 6 Argentine jets reported downed; British ship hit.
Salvador blocks enforcement of land program.
6 ex-Cabinet officers offer plan to cut deficit.

5/25/82 8 Common Market nations extend ban against Argentina.
Iran says it has recaptured port and taken 30,000 Iraqi prisoners.

5/26/82 Argentina calls for negotiations.
E.P.A. assailed on rule for lead in gasoline.

5/27/82 Next British objective: retaking Port Stanley.
Senate panel cuts proposal for aid to Salvador.
Congress vetoes F.T.C. rules on disclosure of car defects.

5/28/82 Britain launches 2 Falkland drives out of beachhead.
House votes down all its bills to set 1983 budget goals.
Senate approves $5 billion program to stimulate housing industry.

Chapter Summary

Three national surveys of the daily newspaper's editorial content were conducted over an eleven-year period. The results suggest that newspaper content is subject to both long-range trends and short-term variations, but all of the categories found in 1971 still appear in today's newspapers, and in roughly the same proportions, based on item counts.

No hard and fast conclusions can be reached from these samples drawn at three fairly isolated points in time. For example, the biggest news story throughout the 1982 survey period was the British and Argentinian struggle over the Falkland Islands. At other times top stories might have been less dramatic in character. But over the eleven years there appears to be a slight trend toward more sports coverage, more business coverage, and a somewhat higher ratio of features to hard news.

## II. IN THE INFORMATION SUPERMARKET: HOW PEOPLE READ

In the so-called electronic era, it is easy to forget that one can gain more information in less time from the daily newspaper than from TV, radio or interactive cable systems. The physical characteristics of a newspaper page provide ideal browsing conditions for the remarkable scanning capabilities of the human eye. The varied content appearing in the daily paper sustains the wide-ranging interests of the human mind.

Editorial research suggests that the mind of a typical newspaper reader operates in extraordinary and surprising ways, except in certain narrowly defined contexts. Individual members of the public may be attracted to particular newspaper items that cut across a number of content categories, but not to other items in the very same categories. Nevertheless, the "menu" approach of interactive systems assumes that users know in advance precisely which categories of information will satisfy their needs.

When it comes to everyday news and advertising, serendipity may give the newspaper a strategic edge over electronic systems: The newspaper makes it easy for readers to find information they want even if they don't know exactly what they are looking for until they come across it. To the general public, interactive systems may be an impressive technological solution for a non-existent problem.

Self-descriptions of newspaper reading habits reflect the newspaper's value as a browsing medium. For example, two-thirds of the yesterday readers in this national sample report going through most of the paper "page by page" (Table 7).

Table 7

How Yesterday Readers Report Going Through the Paper Versus Percent Opening Average Page

| | Went Through Page by Page | Only Looked at Certain Pages, Sections | Average Page Opening† |
|---|---|---|---|
| Total yesterday readers | 67% | 32% | 77% |
| By Sex: Male | 66% | 33% | 75% |
| Female | 69 | 31 | 79 |
| By Age: 18-24 years | 50% | 49% | 75% |
| 25-34 years | 63 | 36 | 75 |
| 35-44 years | 65 | 35 | 77 |
| 45-54 years | 74 | 26 | 80 |
| 55-64 years | 76 | 24 | 78 |
| 65 years or older | 74 | 25 | 78 |
| By Education: | | | |
| College graduate | 75% | 24% | 77% |
| 1-3 years college | 65 | 35 | 76 |
| High school graduate | 67 | 33 | 79 |
| Some high school or less | 63 | 36 | 74 |
| By Household Income: | | | |
| $35,000 & over | 67% | 33% | 75% |
| $25,000-$34,999 | 68 | 32 | 76 |
| $15,000-$24,999 | 64 | 35 | 77 |
| $10,000-$14,999 | 70 | 30 | 79 |
| Under $10,000 | 65 | 32 | 78 |
| By Locality Type: | | | |
| Central city | 65% | 35% | 76% |
| Suburb | 67 | 32 | 77 |
| Non-metropolitan | 70 | 29 | 78 |

Base: Qualified yesterday readers=100%
(In some cases figures in the first two columns do not total 100% because "no answers" are not shown.)

Questions: Did you go through most of the paper page by page, reading whatever was interesting, or did you only look at certain pages or sections?

†How about this page? Do you recall opening it when you read the paper, whether or not you stopped to look at anything?

In every major demographic segment analyzed, at least half of all readers say that they went through yesterday's edition page by page. The lowest level of reported page-by-page scanning (50%) is found among adults under 25 years of age. Among the highest (75%) were college graduates, who are probably most efficient in scanning the newspaper's pages.

The question on how readers go through the newspaper cannot be regarded as a precise behavioral measure because it can also function as an attitude question. For instance, wome readers' answers may amount to judgments about whether the great bulk of the newspaper's content is interesting, or only "certain" items. In either case, the finding that roughly half of the youngest adults report selective reading is cause for concern, especially since infrequent weekday reading is common among this age group.

When yesterday readers are actually taken through a random selection of pages from the newspaper they read, the percent who report opening the average page shows relatively little variation, ranging only from 74% to 80% for the major demographic groups shown in Table 6. This is a much more objective measure than the question on how people go through the paper, and it suggests that the physical act of reading a paper sometimes involves what might be called a page-turning "habit." Even some selective readers may turn all the pages in order to locate those "certain" pages or items of greatest interest.

As might be expected, the percent of readers opening the average page is somewhat higher for thinner newspapers, ranging from 74% for newspapers with 61 pages or more, to 83% for newspapers with 24 pages or less (excluding pages that consist entirely of classified advertising). However, so far as the absolute number of pages is concerned, the readers of fatter newspapers open to a larger number of pages and are more likely to read items on opened pages once they have turned to them (Table 8).

In other words, the more a newspaper gives readers, the more they are likely to read, even though this may represent a smaller proportion of the newspaper's total number of pages.

Table 8

Average Page Opening and Percent of Items Read on Opened Pages, by Number of Pages in Newspaper*

| Number of Pages in Newspaper | Average Page Opening: Percent | Average Page Opening: # of Pages† | % of Items Read on Opened Pages |
|---|---|---|---|
| 24 or less | 83% | 20 | 29% |
| 25-40 | 78 | 25 | 34 |
| 41-60 | 76 | 38 | 38 |
| 61 & over | 74 | 59 | 41 |

*Excludes those pages that consist entirely of classified advertising.
†Estimates based on the following average values: for 24 pages or less, 24; for 25-40 pages, 32; for 41-60 pages, 50; for 61 pages & over, 80.

Given these patterns of reading, it might be expected that average reading time would be longer in large metropolitan areas where newspapers tend to be fattest, than in smaller cities and non-metropolitan areas. The reported time spent reading yesterday's newspaper indicates that this is the case (Table 9), even though respondent estimates of this type are not likely to be very precise.

Table 9

Mean Number of Pages in Newspaper Read and Minutes Spent Reading, by Size of Metropolitan Area

| | Mean Number of Pages† | Minutes Spent Reading |
|---|---|---|
| Metro area, 1 million & over | 81 | 52 |
| Metro area, under 1 million | 43 | 40 |
| Non-metropolitan area | 31 | 37 |

†Excludes those pages that consist entirely of classified advertising.

This study employed two separate approaches to measuring the readership of newspaper content:

1) Respondents were given a shuffled deck of twenty-five cards, each of which described a general type of news or editorial content (21 cards) or advertising (4 cards). They were then asked to put aside "the kinds of things you don't usually read or look at," and finally, to "pick out the three which are the kinds of things in the paper you care about the most."

2) Interviewers showed respondents copies of newspapers they reported reading yesterday and asked them about their page opening and reading of items on the front page, the back page and four interior spreads. Marked newspapers were then returned to the head office of Audits and Surveys, coded according to content and tabulated.[1] (Readership of items on opened pages will be discussed in Chapter III.)

[1]See "Technical Appendix" prepared by Audits & Surveys, Inc. for further details.

For any given category of content the first approach, with percentages based on readers, produces much higher "readership" figures than the second approach, based on items. Part of the discrepancy reflects a tendency among readers to read some but not all of the items in a given content category.[1]

From the card-sorting task it is possible to gain an idea of the range of categories that attract the average reader. In general, newspaper readers put aside about ten cards, thereby implying that (at least sometimes) they "read or look at" a majority of different categories of editorial items and ads (Table 10). This tends to confirm other research[2] indicating that the newspaper offers multiple attractions for a typical reader.

Although adults under 25, low-income readers, and those with less than a high school education tend to put aside more cards, the average number of categories "usually read" is at least fourteen in every major demographic segment. In other words, variety is an intrinsic part of the daily newspaper's appeal. The single-interest reader appears to be a rare animal indeed. Hard news may provide the basic audience franchise, but a newspaper that skimps on features and advertising would probably satisfy very few readers.

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[1] The rules of the card-sorting task should be kept in mind. When respondents put aside the categories they don't usually read or look at, this is not the same as saying that they usually read the remaining categories. However, "usually read" serves as a convenient label.

[2] See "The Sunday Newspaper: A Five-Market Study," Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1980, and "Weekday Reading Patterns: A Two-Market Study," Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1982.

Table 10

Average (Mean) Number of Editorial And Advertising Items "Usually Read"* (out of 25 Listed)

| | | Number (of 25) Usually Read |
|---|---|---|
| Total | | 15.3 |
| By Sex: | Males | 14.9 |
| | Females | 15.6 |
| By Age: | 18-24 years | 14.3 |
| | 25-34 years | 15.7 |
| | 35-44 years | 15.6 |
| | 45-54 years | 15.7 |
| | 55-64 years | 15.9 |
| | 65 years or older | 14.7 |
| By Education: | | |
| | College graduate | 15.9 |
| | 1-3 years college | 15.6 |
| | High school graduate | 15.4 |
| | Some high school or less | 14.2 |
| By Marital Status: | | |
| | Married | 15.6 |
| | Divorced, separated, widowed | 14.8 |
| | Never married | 14.6 |
| By Household Income: | | |
| | $35,000 & over | 15.1 |
| | $25,000-$34,999 | 16.1 |
| | $15,000-$24,999 | 15.4 |
| | $10,000-$14,999 | 15.1 |
| | Under $10,000 | 14.3 |
| By Locality Type: | | |
| | Central City | 15.6 |
| | Suburb | 15.3 |
| | Non-metropolitan | 14.9 |

Base: Total newspaper readers=100%

Question: Each of these cards contains a different kind of news, feature or advertising appearing in most daily newspapers. Please look through them and put to one side the kinds of things you don't usually read or look at.

*Based on number of cards not put aside.

Even though variety is obviously important, the card-sorting task also confirms the importance of hard news. All six of the content categories reported as "usually read"[1] by the largest percentage of adult readers are hard news categories, beginning with "news about the local community," chosen by 89% of all readers in the sample (Table 11).

The card-sorting task deliberately mixed two kinds of content usually kept separate--namely, editorial content and advertising. This approach to a common benchmark indicates that advertising holds interest for a larger percentage of adult readers than several kinds of editorial content, including business and financial news, political opinion columns, and book reviews.

Even in the sexually liberated atmosphere of the 1980s, the level of reading for certain kinds of content is closely linked to the sex of the reader. For men, the six hard news categories mentioned above are the core content of the newspaper; even the sixth ranking category ("news about local politics and government") is selected by 77% of all men readers. The only one of the nineteen remaining categories that approaches this figure for men is "sports news about professional teams," at 71%.

Women readers show quite a different pattern. For women, "news about the local community," at 90%, clearly outranks every other listed subject. However, the five other kinds of hard news listed are matched in appeal by "advice columns" (81%), "food pages" (81%), and "supermarket ads" (80%).

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[1] In this section of the report, expressions such as "usually read" denote cards not put aside in the card-sorting task.

Table 11

Kinds of Newspaper Items "Usually Read," by Sex

| Editorial | Total Adults | Males | Females |
|---|---|---|---|
| News about local community | 89% | 87% | 90% |
| News about economy: jobs, inflation, etc. | 86 | 89 | 83 |
| International or world news | 84 | 88 | 80 |
| News about President, Congress | 78 | 82 | 75 |
| News briefs, summary of news | 77 | 79 | 76 |
| News about local politics, gov't. | 74 | 77 | 72 |
| News about celebrities | 71 | 65 | 77 |
| TV program listings | 67 | 65 | 70 |
| Advice columns | 65 | 46 | 81 |
| Calendar of local events | 61 | 57 | 65 |
| Letters to the editor | 60 | 57 | 63 |
| Food pages | 59 | 33 | 81 |
| Editorials, editor's opinions | 58 | 58 | 58 |
| Comic strips, funnies | 57 | 61 | 55 |
| Obituaries | 53 | 46 | 59 |
| Sports news. local schools, etc. | 51 | 63 | 40 |
| Business & financial news | 50 | 60 | 41 |
| Sports news: professional teams | 49 | 71 | 29 |
| Political opinion columns | 47 | 52 | 43 |
| Book reviews | 29 | 24 | 33 |
| Crossword puzzle | 23 | 19 | 27 |
| **Advertising** | | | |
| Supermarket ads | 64% | 45% | 80% |
| Store ads for clothing | 62 | 46 | 76 |
| Classified or want ads | 60 | 64 | 57 |
| Movie ads | 56 | 56 | 55 |

Base: Total newspaper readers=100%

Question: Each of these cards contains a different kind of news, feature or advertising item appearing in most daily newspapers. Please look through them and put to one side the kinds of things you don't usually read or look at.

Younger and Older Readers Have Different Interests

Research consistently identifies age as a critical influence on daily newspaper reading. In the present survey, results of the card-sorting task show that younger and older readers are attracted to very different kinds of content.

"News about the local community" and "news about the economy" are read by more than eight out of ten readers in all age groups, but readers under 25 years old may be even more attracted to "movie ads," which are usually read by 89% of this age group (Table 12). Among the youngest adult readers, more than three out of four show interest in "classified or want ads" (78%), while about the same proportion (76%) indicated that they usually read "news about celebrities." Content categories that involve political or government issues have less appeal for this age group: "editorials, editor's opinions" (read by only 32%); "political opinion columns" (by 28%); "news about local politics and government" (by 58%).

In contrast, only 24% of the readers over 65 years old indicate that they usually read "movie ads," and only 37% express interest in "classified or want ads," whereas 65% usually read "editorials, editor's opinions" and 53% read "political opinion columns."

Interest in several content categories tends to peak in the middle age groups, especially "news about the economy" and "business and financial news."

Table 12

Kinds of Newspaper Items "Usually Read," by Age

| Editorial | 18-24 Years | 25-34 Years | 35-44 Years | 45-64 Years | 65 Yrs. & Older |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| News about local community | 85% | 88% | 89% | 92% | 88% |
| News about economy: jobs, inflation, etc. | 83 | 89 | 87 | 88 | 81 |
| International or world news | 73 | 88 | 86 | 86 | 83 |
| News about President, Congress | 62 | 78 | 81 | 84 | 81 |
| News briefs, summary of news | 68 | 80 | 82 | 80 | 74 |
| News about local politics, gov't. | 58 | 74 | 76 | 81 | 78 |
| News about celebrities | 76 | 74 | 69 | 71 | 65 |
| TV program listings | 72 | 70 | 62 | 65 | 68 |
| Advice columns | 59 | 62 | 66 | 69 | 67 |
| Calendar of local events | 60 | 69 | 61 | 57 | 58 |
| Letters to the editor | 38 | 58 | 62 | 72 | 67 |
| Food pages | 43 | 58 | 61 | 66 | 62 |
| Editorials, editor's opinions | 32 | 55 | 63 | 70 | 65 |
| Comic strips, funnies | 72 | 58 | 55 | 54 | 49 |
| Obituaries | 36 | 42 | 51 | 65 | 70 |
| Sports news: local schools, etc. | 59 | 51 | 55 | 47 | 44 |
| Business & financial news | 38 | 52 | 52 | 57 | 44 |
| Sports news: professional teams | 54 | 48 | 50 | 46 | 46 |
| Political opinion columns | 28 | 47 | 46 | 57 | 53 |
| Book reviews | 21 | 31 | 33 | 32 | 23 |
| Crossword puzzle | 25 | 21 | 23 | 24 | 25 |
| **Advertising** | | | | | |
| Supermarket ads | 52% | 63% | 64% | 69% | 71% |
| Store ads for clothing | 66 | 66 | 64 | 60 | 52 |
| Classified or want ads | 78 | 69 | 61 | 55 | 37 |
| Movie ads | 89 | 73 | 57 | 38 | 24 |

Base: Total newspaper readers=100%

## Education Affects Reading Patterns

The card-sorting approach to readership measurement elicits different patterns of response from people at differing levels of education. This can be seen most readily by contrasting college graduates with those lacking high school diplomas.

Regardless of education, roughly nine out of ten readers show some interest in "news about the local community" (Table 13). However, the college educated are much more likely to express interest in developements beyond their immediate residential areas. For example, 94% of college graduates "usually read" international or world news, compared with 76% of those lacking a high school diploma. College graduates also show more interest in political issues, business and finance, and book reviews.

Among the few content categories more likely to be read by those at the lower end of the educational scale are food pages (62%, vs. 52% for college graduates), obituaries (65% vs. 47%) and supermarket ads (70% vs. 53%).

It must be remembered that the card-sorting task is fairly abstract. Instead of specific items, it brings to mind the idea of broadly defined content categories. This kind of approach can be contaminated by a respondent's perception of reading interests that are "proper" for his or her social position. Some college graduates may overstate their reading of international news and understate their interest in supermarket advertising. Of course, rankings also reflect reading opportunities. Few daily newspapers regularly run book reviews, thus few usually read them.

Table 13

Kinds of Newspaper Items "Usually Read," by Education

| Editorial | College Graduate | 1-3 Yrs College | High School Graduate | Some High School or Less |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| News about local community | 89% | 89% | 88% | 88% |
| News about economy: jobs, inflation, etc. | 91 | 88 | 84 | 83 |
| International or world news | 94 | 89 | 80 | 76 |
| News about President, Congress | 87 | 81 | 73 | 76 |
| News briefs, summary of news | 84 | 84 | 74 | 69 |
| News about local politics, gov't. | 81 | 79 | 72 | 67 |
| News about celebrities | 73 | 77 | 72 | 60 |
| TV program listings | 64 | 64 | 70 | 67 |
| Advice columns | 61 | 66 | 67 | 63 |
| Calendar of local events | 64 | 64 | 63 | 51 |
| Letters to the editor | 70 | 63 | 58 | 53 |
| Food pages | 52 | 54 | 64 | 62 |
| Editorials, editor's opinions | 70 | 59 | 54 | 55 |
| Comic strips, funnies | 59 | 57 | 59 | 54 |
| Obituaries | 47 | 43 | 54 | 65 |
| Sports news: local schools, etc. | 51 | 50 | 54 | 45 |
| Business & financial news | 67 | 51 | 46 | 40 |
| Sports news: professional teams | 51 | 54 | 48 | 42 |
| Political opinion columns | 57 | 51 | 44 | 42 |
| Book reviews | 44 | 37 | 25 | 15 |
| Crossword puzzle | 21 | 26 | 24 | 21 |
| **Advertising** | | | | |
| Supermarket ads | 53% | 58% | 69% | 70% |
| Store ads for clothing | 57 | 60 | 68 | 59 |
| Classified or want ads | 53 | 59 | 65 | 58 |
| Movie ads | 55 | 64 | 61 | 39 |

Base: Total newspaper readers=100%

The Combined Effects of Age and Education

Demographic classifications are useful analytic tools but may obscure the fact that each individual newspaper reader embodies a complex array of characteristics, including sex, age, education, occupation, income group, geographic region, and so forth. No analysis can lay bare the full complexity involved in readers' responses to newspaper content, but additional insights may be gained by examining the combined effects of several variables.

Table 14 shows responses to the card-sorting task by readers in two educational groups within two age groups.[1] These data reveal several different kinds of patterns but generally confirm that interest in most kinds of newspaper content is higher among the college educated and adults who are 45 or older.

Education appears to exert more influence than age does on interest in subjects like international news, business and finance, news briefs and book reviews. Conversely, age seems to be the more critical factor for advice columns, editorial page material, comic strips, obituaries, classified advertising and movie advertising.

Additional data on reading patterns from the card-sorting task can be found in Appendix Tables 2, 3 and 4.

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[1] It should be pointed out that even though the two educational groups in Table 13 fall within the age ranges shown, this does not mean that the groups are "matched" by age. For example, among those who are 45 or older, the average or median age may be lower for those with college backgrounds than for those who have not gone beyond high school.

Table 14

Kinds of Newspaper Items "Usually Read," by Education within Age*

| | 18-34 years old | | 45 years & older | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Editorial | Some Coll+ | HS Grad or Less | Some Coll+ | HS Grad or Less |
| News about local community | 87% | 86% | 91% | 90% |
| News about economy: jobs, inflation, etc. | 90 | 82 | 88 | 84 |
| International or world news | 91 | 73 | 92 | 82 |
| News about President, Congress | 82 | 62 | 85 | 82 |
| News briefs, summary of news | 84 | 67 | 82 | 75 |
| News about local politics, gov't. | 77 | 58 | 85 | 78 |
| News about celebrities | 78 | 73 | 75 | 65 |
| TV program listings | 67 | 63 | 61 | 74 |
| Advice columns | 60 | 61 | 70 | 67 |
| Calendar of local events | 65 | 65 | 59 | 55 |
| Letters to the editor | 59 | 41 | 76 | 67 |
| Food pages | 47 | 56 | 60 | 67 |
| Editorials, editor's opinions | 53 | 38 | 76 | 65 |
| Comic strips, funnies | 61 | 66 | 52 | 52 |
| Obituaries | 38 | 41 | 59 | 70 |
| Sports news: local schools, etc. | 54 | 55 | 42 | 47 |
| Business & financial news | 53 | 40 | 65 | 46 |
| Sports news: professional teams | 55 | 47 | 50 | 44 |
| Political opinion columns | 49 | 30 | 60 | 54 |
| Book reviews | 36 | 18 | 44 | 23 |
| Crossword puzzle | 20 | 25 | 30 | 22 |
| **Advertising** | | | | |
| Supermarket ads | 52% | 63% | 61% | 74% |
| Store ads for clothing | 62 | 70 | 52 | 60 |
| Classified or want ads | 67 | 79 | 41 | 50 |
| Movie ads | 76 | 84 | 34 | 32 |

Base: Total newspaper readers=100%

*The age group from 35 to 44 years has been excluded to highlight differences between the extremes of the age distribution of readers.

Frequent and Infrequent Readers Have Similar Interests...But

As Table 15 shows, the card-sorting task reveals a number of similarities between frequent and infrequent readers of daily newspapers. For example, "news about the local community" and "news about the economy" rank first and second among both groups. At the other end of the spectrum, "book reviews" and "crossword puzzles" attract the smallest percentage of both groups.

In spite of this superficial resemblance, overall patterns of interest suggest a few important differences between regular and occasional readers. An examination of the twenty-one categories of editorial content shows that "comic strips, funnies" represents the only case in which infrequent readers match or surpass frequent readers in the percent who usually read such content. On the other hand, frequent readers are much more likely to read material bearing on political issues. In contrast to editorial content, usual reading is higher among infrequent readers for all four kinds of advertising included in the card-sorting task.

In evaluating these differences, it is important to note that frequent and infrequent reader groups also differ in their demographic composition. On the whole, infrequent readers tend to be younger, less well educated and less affluent. (See Appendix Table 6.)

Table 15

Kinds of Newspaper Items "Usually Read," by Frequency of Newspaper Reading

| Editorial | Frequent Readers† | Infrequent Readers‡ |
|---|---|---|
| News about local community | 90% | 86% |
| News about economy: jobs, inflation, etc. | 87 | 84 |
| International or world news | 86 | 79 |
| News about President, Congress | 81 | 71 |
| News briefs, summary of news | 81 | 69 |
| News about local politics, gov't. | 79 | 64 |
| News about celebrities | 74 | 64 |
| TV program listings | 68 | 66 |
| Advice columns | 66 | 61 |
| Calendar of local events | 63 | 57 |
| Letters to the editor | 65 | 49 |
| Food pages | 59 | 58 |
| Editorials, editor's opinions | 64 | 44 |
| Comic strips, funnies | 57 | 59 |
| Obituaries | 58 | 41 |
| Sports news: local schools, etc. | 52 | 47 |
| Business & financial news | 53 | 42 |
| Sports news: professional teams | 52 | 41 |
| Political opinion columns | 52 | 35 |
| Book reviews | 31 | 25 |
| Crossword puzzle | 24 | 23 |
| **Advertising** | | |
| Supermarket ads | 63% | 65% |
| Store ads for clothing | 61 | 64 |
| Classified or want ads | 56 | 68 |
| Movie ads | 53 | 63 |

Base: Total newspaper readers=100%

†Read four or five out of past five weekdays.
‡Read a daily (or Sunday) newspaper at least occasionally, but less than four of the past five weekdays.

How Much Do They Care About the Things They Read?

Readership and involvement are separate issues. Some kinds of content that are read by a minority of the total audience may be very important to those readers.[1] In order to explore the relationship between reading and involvement, the second step in the card-sorting task asked respondents to pick out the three things in the newspaper they "care about the most."

The figures generated in this way--that is, the percentage of those usually reading a category who care most about that kind of item--might be described as a measure of the item's "intensity of appeal" among readers. As Table 16 shows, the ranking of the twenty-five items according to their intensity of appeal is quite different from their ranking on readership alone.

First, it should be noted that no more than half of the readers of any of the listed categories identify that subject as one of the three they care most about. This finding is hardly surprising, in view of the fact that the average newspaper reader appears to read about fifteen of the twenty-five listed categories with some frequency.

News about the world, the local community and the economy rank very high in intensity of appeal, but for men the highest level of involvement is found among readers of sports news about professional teams. Among women, the three hard news categories previously mentioned generate more involvement than any other subject, but advice columns and supermarket ads are also high-ranking items.

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[1]For another approach to this subject see "New Dimensions from Newspaper Recall Scores," Media General Research Department, November 1976.

Table 16

"Intensity of Appeal"* of Newspaper Items, by Sex

| Editorial | Total Readers | Male Readers | Female Readers |
|---|---|---|---|
| International or world news | 43% | 48% | 38% |
| Sports news: professional teams | 41 | 50 | 20 |
| News about local community | 35 | 32 | 39 |
| News about economy: jobs, inflation, etc. | 33 | 36 | 30 |
| Advice columns | 23 | 9 | 29 |
| Obituaries | 20 | 16 | 22 |
| Business & finanacial news | 19 | 24 | 14 |
| Comic strips, funnies | 19 | 19 | 19 |
| Food pages | 19 | 6 | 23 |
| News briefs, summary of news | 19 | 19 | 20 |
| News about President, Congress | 18 | 21 | 15 |
| News about local politics, gov't. | 18 | 19 | 17 |
| Sports news: local schools, etc. | 16 | 22 | 9 |
| Editorials, editor's opinions | 15 | 15 | 14 |
| Crossword puzzle | 13 | 13 | 13 |
| TV program listings | 11 | 11 | 11 |
| Letters to the editor | 8 | 7 | 9 |
| News about celebrities | 8 | 5 | 10 |
| Calendar of local events | 7 | 6 | 8 |
| Book reviews | 6 | 5 | 7 |
| Political opinion columns | 5 | 7 | 4 |
| **Advertising** | | | |
| Supermarket ads | 23% | 9% | 29% |
| Classified or want ads | 21 | 23 | 19 |
| Store ads for clothing | 9 | 5 | 11 |
| Movie ads | 8 | 9 | 8 |

Base: Total who usually read each type of item=100%

Question: Now, from the cards you have left, please pick out the three which are the kinds of things in the paper you care about the most.

*Proportion of those reading each category who say it is one of the three things in the newspaper they "care about the most."

Chapter Summary

The content and makeup of the daily newspaper make it the browsing medium par excellence. Readers familiar with the newspaper are aware that it offers an easily scanned combination of hard news, features and advertising--a comfortable mixture of the predictable and the surprising.

The newspaper's value as a browsing medium is reflected in the finding that two out of three readers report going through most of the paper "page by page." A separate measure obtained by taking yesterday readers through a random sample of pages in the newspapers they read indicates that the average page is opened by 77% of issue readers. Although the percentage opening the average page is somewhat lower for fatter newspapers, readers of these papers actually open to a larger number of pages, read more items on opened pages and spend more time with the paper.

One of the newspaper's greatest assets is clearly the variety of information it contains. A card-sorting approach to measuring readership indicates that the typical newspaper reader devotes at least some attention to about fifteen out of twenty-five listed kinds of editorial and advertising matter. The daily newspaper's basic franchise depends on hard news about the nation, the local community and the economy, but advertising, sports, amusements and other features are also important to many readers.

## III. THE READING OF EDITORIAL ITEMS IN YESTERDAY'S NEWSPAPER

### Pitfalls in Measuring Item Readership

Any report on the reading of specific kinds of newspaper items should acknowledge the tentative nature of such measures. A methodological report could devote an entire chapter to the problems involved; for the purposes of this report it may be enough to note that most of the problems reflect one or more of three factors.

1. Small bases

   As mentioned in the preface, this research was conducted with a probability sample of adults in 1,979 households. Altogether, 1,288 qualified readers of yesterday newspapers were asked about 36,869 editorial items (unweighted total).

   These are not 36,869 independent measures; all were obtained from the same 1,288 readers. Moreover, daily newspapers contain so many kinds of editorial items that the bases for analytic cells can become quite small. For example, personal advice columns account for only 488 items exposed to qualifed readers, and this base rapidly dwindles if broken into four educational groups, six age groups, etc.

   The card-sorting task discussed in Chapter II was included as a parallel approach in this study mainly because of the small-base problem. Without some device of this type, it is difficult for a large national survey to obtain any measure of reader interest in items like crossword puzzles.

2. Interrelated variables

   When a national study is conducted with respondents who read many different newspapers published in specific localities, factors influencing attitudes and behavior cannot be neatly parceled out as they are in laboratory experiments. In real life, the contamination of one variable by several others hampers the analysis of data.

For example, it is reasonable to ask how the number of pages in a newspaper affects the reading of editorial items. Any effort to answer this apparently simple question is complicated by the fact that readers of thin papers and fat papers tend to live in different kinds of localities (Table 17). The mean number of pages in the newspaper also varies with circulation, publishing cycle, day of the week, census region, and the reader's educational level.

Attempts to tackle this problem by analyzing the data on number of pages within locality type, publishing cycle, etc., are soon confounded by the small-base problem.

Table 17

Mean Number of Pages* in Newspapers Read by Qualified Yesterday Readers, by Selected Variables

| | Mean | | Mean |
|---|---|---|---|
| By Locality Type: | | By Publishing Cycle: | |
| Central city | 65 | AM--morning | 67 |
| Metro suburban | 61 | PM--afternoon | 39 |
| Non-metropolitan | 31 | All-day | 69 |
| By Circulation: | | By Weekday Editions: | |
| 250,000 & over | 91 | Monday | 43 |
| 100,000-250,000 | 58 | Tuesday | 40 |
| 50,000-100,000 | 44 | Wednesday | 60 |
| 25,000-50,000 | 38 | Thursday | 69 |
| Under 25,000 | 23 | Friday | 63 |
| By Census Region: | | By Reader's Education: | |
| Northeast | 67 | College graduate | 60 |
| North Central | 45 | 1-3 years college | 58 |
| South | 47 | High school graduate | 54 |
| West | 64 | Some high school or less | 48 |

*Excludes spreads consisting entirely of classified advertising.

3. Readers' "Categories" of Editorial Items Vary Widely

When clear-cut guides are provided, it is a fairly simple matter for different people to achieve a high level of consistency in the way they sort editorial

items into categories. In the absence of guidelines, however, other research[1] shows that individual readers have unique ways of classifying content.

Overlapping categories and other discrepancies in the way newspaper readers and researchers classify the same item may have unpredictable effects on the outcome of readership studies.

Despite the problems described above, from our results it is possible to draw a few conclusions about the reading of editorial items, but the level of detail which can be presented is necessarily limited.

Overall Figures on Item Readership

Table 18 shows the percent of items read on opened pages for total adult readers, men and women. First, it might be noted that these figures referring to specific items in specific newspapers tend to place newspaper reading in a different perspective than the results of the more general card-sorting task described in Chapter II. For example, a higher proportion of women said they "usually read" news about the local community (90%) than international or world news (80%). However, in daily newspapers read by women during the survey period, international news items had a higher probability of being read (37%, vs. 29% for state and local items).

In part this difference between usual reading and yesterday reading reflects the fact that it is not possible in a large national survey to pinpoint items about the reader's "local community." However, item readership is also affected by survey timing. As mentioned in Chapter I, the Falkland Islands invasion was a running story throughout the survey period and was regarded as the "biggest" story by 50% of all respondents.

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[1] See "The Newspaper in Readers' Minds: An Analysis of Readers' Content Perceptions," Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1982.

Table 18

Percent of Editorial Items Read on Opened Pages,* by Sex

| | Total Adults | Males | Females |
|---|---|---|---|
| Average for all editorial items | 35% | 35% | 34% |
| Economic news, actions & policies | 31% | 34% | 28% |
| Environment, resources, population, engery | 36 | 37 | 35 |
| Government actions (U.S. & foreign) | 30 | 32 | 28 |
| War, rebellions, defense activity | 44 | 48 | 40 |
| Crime | 48 | 48 | 47 |
| Professional sports | 30 | 39 | 20 |
| Other sports | 22 | 27 | 17 |
| Editorials, unsigned | 27 | 32 | 22 |
| Editorial cartoons | 36 | 44 | 29 |
| Other editorial page content♦ | 31 | 34 | 29 |
| Education, child care | 33 | 31 | 35 |
| Cultural events, arts, reviews | 29 | 25 | 32 |
| Other amusements◇ | 36 | 31 | 40 |
| Personal advice columns | 47 | 34 | 57 |
| Other general interest● | 36 | 32 | 40 |
| Health, welfare, social issues | 40 | 38 | 42 |
| News summaries, briefs, index | 51 | 51 | 51 |
| All other content○ | 40 | 39 | 41 |
| International news items | 40% | 44% | 37% |
| National news items | 36 | 37 | 35 |
| State & local news items | 31 | 33 | 29 |

*Base is items on pages opened by qualified yesterday readers. Figures indicate that 35% of all editorial items were reported read; that 34% of all items in newspapers read by women were read; etc.

♦Includes letters to the editor and political columns that may or may not appear on the editorial page itself.

◇Includes comics, puzzles, horoscopes, TV & radio listings.

●Includes food, home, society, obituaries and gossip columns.

○All other content not classified elsewhere (science, inventions, religion, etc.).

Out of eighteen listed categories of editorial content in Table 18, "news summaries, news briefs" has the highest probability (51%) of being read. Readership of this kind of item is identical for newspapers read by men and women, suggesting that many of today's readers are busy people. News stories about crime, at 48%, rank second in the percentage read, and are also well read among both men and women.

Even though the overall figures indicate that the sex of the reader has no appreciable effect on the likelihood that an "average" item will be read, certain categories of editorial items show appreciable differences between the sexes. Virtually all kinds of "general interest" items are better read among women; this is particularly true for personal advice columns (57% of such items read among women, 34% among men). Conversely, an item about professional sports has a 39% chance of being read if the newspaper reader is male, but only a 20% chance if the reader is female.

Interest in Editorial Items Among Yesterday Non-Readers

Respondents who had not read a daily yesterday were taken through a sample of pages in a local newspaper they ordinarily read and asked about their level of interest in each editorial item of five column inches or more. The "interest" measures obtained in this way, shown in Appendix Table 5, roughly parallel figures for item readership. Many more men than women show interest in professional sports items, whereas figures for personal advice columns reveal the opposite pattern.

Expressing an interest in specific items is probably more subject to a "social desirability" bias than is recalled reading, especially for items that involve such issues as health, welfare and the environment, which may account for the higher average levels obtained on this measure.

How Do Reader Characteristics Affect Readership?

Demographic factors like the reader's sex, age, education, income and place of residence obviously affect the likelihood that particular kinds of editorial items will be read. In the aggregate, however, such factors exert less influence than intuition might suggest.

Table 19 shows item readership for total editorial content and for seven broadly defined categories that account for 85% of all items, by seven demographic variables. Excluding the total lines, there are 161 individual item readership figures in this table. Within this large array, the lowest figure shown is 19%, the level of sports item readership among women, non-metropolitan residents, and those not reporting household income. The highest figures is 47%, the level of international news item readership among college graduates.[1]

Table 19 is a useful corrective for folk wisdom, intuition and anecdotal evidence. The key point which should be made is that all kinds of people read all kinds of editorial content. The difference in the level of sports item readership among men (35%) and women (19%) is highly significant, but any snap judgment that sports

[1]Certain items show higher or lower readership levels when combinations of demographic attributes are analyzed.

items appeal only to men is clearly wrong. There are both upper and lower limits to the potential appeal of any given kind of editorial item, but no group shows near-zero interest in any category.

The attraction of newspaper content for so many kinds of readers may depend on the multi-dimensional aspects of most news and feature items. With the exception of specialized standing features (like crossword puzzles and bridge columns) most items have several potential "hooks" that can catch the reader's attention. A woman who finds football boring may look over a story about a neighbor's son who has been named best player on the state university team. A man with no special interest in financial news may read an item about his own employer.

The possibility of finding unexpected personal connections with stories in the newspaper may help to explain why 67% of all readers report going through yesterday's edition "page by page" (Table 7).

Table 19 is worth examining closely for the differences it reveals among demographic segments. For example, the only two categories of items showing higher readership figures for women than for men are "amusements" and "other general interest."

The table also suggests that item readership tends to be highest among the demographic segments most likely to be found in the daily newspaper audience. Readership of the "average" item and most of the seven categories is high for good newspaper readers (like college

graduates) but low for poor readers (like adults under 25 years of age). Those who read most intensely and those who read most regularly tend to be the same kinds of people.

The two geographic classifications shown in the table are to a degree correlated with one another: non-metropolitan areas contain one-third of the population of readers in the South and North Central regions, as compared with less than 20% of those in the Northeast and West.

Table 19

Percent of Editorial Items Read on Opened Pages, by Demographics

| | Average: All Items | International | National | State, Local |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total Adults | 35% | 40% | 36% | 31% |
| By Sex: Male | 35% | 44% | 37% | 33% |
| Female | 34 | 37 | 35 | 29 |
| By Age: | | | | |
| 18-24 years | 28% | 32% | 28% | 22% |
| 25-34 years | 36 | 39 | 31 | 31 |
| 35-44 years | 36 | 38 | 38 | 32 |
| 45-64 years | 37 | 45 | 38 | 34 |
| 65 years or older | 35 | 41 | 41 | 31 |
| By Education: | | | | |
| College graduate | 38% | 47% | 42% | 36% |
| 1-3 years college | 34 | 42 | 37 | 24 |
| High school graduate | 34 | 33 | 33 | 31 |
| Some high school or less | 32 | 42 | 33 | 29 |
| By Household Income: | | | | |
| $35,000 & over | 35% | 40% | 38% | 33% |
| $25,000-$34,999 | 34 | 42 | 32 | 28 |
| $15,000-$24,999 | 36 | 44 | 33 | 32 |
| Under $15,000 | 34 | 40 | 37 | 30 |
| Income refused | 33 | 33 | 39 | 32 |
| By Census Region: | | | | |
| Northeast | 38% | 42% | 42% | 35% |
| North Central | 31 | 35 | 32 | 26 |
| South | 34 | 40 | 36 | 33 |
| West | 37 | 44 | 33 | 28 |
| By Locality Type: | | | | |
| Central city | 39% | 41% | 38% | 35% |
| Suburban | 37 | 42 | 40 | 31 |
| Non-metropolitan | 33 | 34 | 28 | 27 |

Table 19 (continued)

Percent of Editorial Items Read on Opened Pages, by Demographics

| | Editorial Page† | Total Sports‡ | Amusements†† | Other General Interest‡‡ |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total Readers | 31% | 27% | 35% | 36% |
| By Sex: Male | 35% | 35% | 30% | 32% |
| Female | 27 | 19 | 39 | 40 |
| By Age: | | | | |
| 18-24 years | 29% | 24% | 25% | 29% |
| 25-34 years | 30 | 31 | 41 | 39 |
| 35-44 years | 28 | 32 | 32 | 41 |
| 45-64 years | 33 | 29 | 35 | 37 |
| 65 years or older | 32 | 21 | 37 | 35 |
| By Education: | | | | |
| College graduate | 37% | 28% | 35% | 40% |
| 1-3 years college | 34 | 27 | 32 | 37 |
| High school graduate | 28 | 30 | 36 | 36 |
| Some high school or less | 27 | 22 | 32 | 32 |
| By Household Income: | | | | |
| $35,000 & over | 34% | 23% | 36% | 37% |
| $25,000-$34,999 | 30 | 36 | 28 | 36 |
| $15,000-$24,999 | 29 | 37 | 36 | 39 |
| Under $15,000 | 31 | 23 | 39 | 41 |
| Income refused | 31 | 19 | 32 | 28 |
| By Census Region: | | | | |
| Northeast | 30 | 27 | 36 | 42 |
| North Central | 24 | 25 | 34 | 32 |
| South | 31 | 26 | 33 | 35 |
| West | 33 | 31 | 39 | 38 |
| By Locality Type: | | | | |
| Central city | 29 | 20 | 37 | 41 |
| Suburban | 33 | 26 | 38 | 40 |
| Non-metropolitan | 28 | 19 | 28 | 30 |

†Includes unsigned editorials, editorial cartoons, political columns and letters to the editor.
‡Includes professional sports and other sports.
††Includes cultural events, art, reviews, comics and other amusements.
‡‡Includes education, child care, personal advice columns, food, home, social news, obituaries and gossip columns.

Chapter Summary

Identifying the factors that influence the reading of specific kinds of editorial items is complicated by several methodological problems, but demographic variables such as the newspaper reader's sex, age, and educational level are clearly important.

As a rule, these demographic factors have more pronounced effects on the reading of particular categories of news and features than on the overall average. Item readership levels for men and women readers are virtually identical for the "average" editorial item but very different for specific editorial items such as sports and personal advice columns.

All kinds of readers show at least some interest in every kind of content, but the percent of items read on opened pages tends to be higher for those demographic segments that contain the best newspaper readers.

Readership of hard news items is probably subject to short-term as well as long-term shifts. In this survey, readership figures were five percentage points higher for international news items than for all items. This may reflect the importance of the Falkland Island crisis at the time of the survey, but it also jibes with responses to a question on readers' general interest in world and national vs. local news.[1]

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[1]See "Newspapers in American News Diets: A Comparative Assessment," Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1984.

## IV. HOW DO NEWSPAPER FACTORS AFFECT ITEM READERSHIP?

Chapter III looked at the general problem of measuring item readership and showed that the characteristics of readers affect the reading of different kinds of content, even though all kinds of readers read every type of content to some degree.

This chapter examines the relationship between item reading and the characteristics of the newspaper itself. The remarks on the problem of "interrelated variables" in Chapter III should serve as a reminder that in real life some newspaper attributes are closely tied to differences in reader characteristics, but it is not possible to discuss all of the connections between the two within the scope of this report.

### Are Items In Fatter Newspapers Better Read?

One of the most controversial findings of this national study is that the percentage of items read on opened pages is higher for newspapers with 61 pages or more than for those with 24 or fewer pages,[1] but this is further supported by the detailed results shown in Table 20. (However, as pointed out in Chapter II, the percentage of total pages opened tends to drop as the number of pages increases.)

The general pattern holds for the average editorial item and for four out of seven broadly defined categories. The categories on which smaller and larger newspapers show the smallest differences are "state and local news," "editorial page" items, and "international news."

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[1] Number of pages are exclusive of those consisting entirely of classified advertising.

Table 20

Percent of Editorial Items Read on Opened Pages, by Number of Pages in Newspaper

| | Number of Pages: | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 24 or Less | 25-40 | 41-60 | 61 & Over |
| Average, all items | 29% | 34% | 38% | 41% |
| International news | 36% | 40% | 42% | 41% |
| National news | 29 | 37 | 35 | 42 |
| State & local news | 29 | 30 | 33 | 33 |
| Editorial page items | 32 | 26 | 31 | 34 |
| Sports | 20 | 27 | 35 | 46 |
| Amusements | 30 | 34 | 39 | 42 |
| Other general interest | 32 | 38 | 37 | 41 |

The pattern shown in Table 20 may seem contrary to expectation, but the consistency of the figures tends to validate the finding. It is unlikely that any single factor can explain why item readership should be higher for fatter newspapers, but several possible explanations will be offered in this chapter.

Initially, it might be noted that special-interest pages and sections are more common among fatter newspapers. Large daily newspapers might be thought of as having a "dual" audience structure: one "mass" audience attracted by hard news stories, and several large but distinct "segments" interested in other news and features of various kinds, such as business or entertainment.

Do Fatter Newspapers Offer More Hard News?

Major metropolitan dailies have large newsholes and consquently more editorial content of all types, but data from this study suggest that the fattest newspapers also carry a relatively larger number of hard news items and proportionately less in the way of general interest items, features and sports news (Table 21).

Table 21

Composition of Editorial Items on Opened Pages, by Size of Paper

| | Number of Pages: | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 24 or Less | 25-40 | 41-60 | 61 or Over |
| Hard news categories | 20.8% | 22.3% | 28.0% | 32.4% |
| International news | 4.7% | 5.0% | 5.9% | 11.1% |
| National news | 4.0 | 3.6 | 5.9 | 7.0 |
| State & local news | 12.1 | 13.7 | 16.2 | 14.3 |
| Editorial page (total) | 6.7 | 6.5 | 7.7 | 9.3 |
| Sports (total) | 16.8 | 20.5 | 11.1 | 7.5 |
| General interest (total) | 42.3 | 37.4 | 37.0 | 33.0 |
| All other | 13.4 | 13.3 | 16.2 | 17.8 |

Base: Editorial items on opened pages in newspapers read by qualified yesterday readers.

In the thinnest newspapers, international news items represent about 5 of all items on opened pages, as compared with about 11 in the fattest newspapers. Conversely, the percentage of items falling into the sports category is twice as high among the smallest papers as it is among the largest, even though the absolute number of items carried by the largest can be much greater because of their larger newsholes.

--And Large and Small Papers Have Different Readers

Apart from any intrinsic differences in the content mix of fat newspapers and thin newspapers, there are important differences in the demographic mix of their audiences. Data on educational level and the kinds of localities in which readers live can serve to illustrate this critical point (Table 22).

Table 22

Education and Residence of Qualified Yesterday Readers, by size of paper

| | Number of Pages: | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 24 or Less | 25-40 | 41-60 | 61 & Over |
| Education: | | | | |
| College graduate | 14% | 18% | 21% | 23% |
| 1-3 years college | 17 | 21 | 19 | 25 |
| High school graduate | 42 | 38 | 37 | 37 |
| Some high school or less | 25 | 22 | 20 | 15 |
| Locality Type: | | | | |
| SMSA central city | 9% | 29% | 34% | 44% |
| SMSA suburban | 25 | 44 | 49 | 51 |
| Non-metropolitan | 66 | 27 | 17 | 5 |

Considering the kinds of demographic differences among readers shown in Table 22, changes in the mix of newspaper content might not overcome their influence and raise the average item readership level for small newspapers. Nevertheless, it might be worthwhile for some small dailies to consider a reduction in sports coverage: The sports category represents nearly 17 of all items in the thinnest papers (Table 21), but shows the lowest readership levels of any of the seven categories listed (Table 20) for newspapers of that size.

Item Readership in Morning, Evening and All-Day Editions

The thickness of a newspaper is also related to its publishing cycle, especially since a number of central city newspapers have suspended PM editions or merged former combinations into a single all-day newspaper. As previously shown in Table 17, AM and all-day papers have about 75% more pages than PM papers, on average. In spite of this large difference, average item readership levels across specific content categories are about the same for AM and PM editions (Table 23).[1]

Table 23

Percent of Editorial Items Read on Opened Pages, by Publishing Cycle

| | AM | PM | All Day |
|---|---|---|---|
| Average, all items | 35% | 33% | 43% |
| International news | 41 | 38 | 42 |
| National news | 35 | 34 | 46 |
| State & local news | 31 | 31 | 28 |
| Editorial page items | 33 | 28 | 34 |
| Sports | 27 | 26 | 44 |
| Amusements | 33 | 34 | 47 |
| Other general interest | 36 | 35 | 48 |

Many of the qualifying comments made about large and small newspapers also apply to papers with AM and PM publishing cycles. For example, readers of AM and all-day editions are more likely than PM readers to have college educations and less likely to live in non-metropolitan areas. (See Appendix Table 7.)

[1]The all-day figures in this table are shown for the sake of completeness but there were only 13% qualified readers of all-day editions, so these figures are subject to substantial sampling variation (+9 %).

## Front-page Items Are the Best Read

Table 24 shows that hard news appearing on the front page has a better chance of being read than news items on other pages. This suggests that readers agree with editors on which news is most important, or that they have learned to rely on editors to decide for them which items deserve the greatest attention. International news items on the first page had a very high readership level (54%), in part reflecting the fact that the Falkland Islands crisis was the "biggest" news story at the time of the survey. But national and state or local news items also showed comparable gains from being placed on the front page.

Table 24

Percent of Editorial Items Read on Opened Pages, by Position in Paper

| | Average: All Items | International | National | State, Local |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Front page | 47% | 54% | 43% | 46% |
| Back page | 35 | □ | □ | 29 |
| Average interior spread | 33% | 36% | 34% | 28% |
| First spread | 36% | 35% | 36% | 29% |
| Second spread | 32 | 35 | 36 | 28 |
| Third spread | 33 | 37 | 32 | 24 |
| Fourth spread | 30 | 36 | 32 | 24 |
| First page of section | 37 | □ | □ | 33 |
| Back page of section | 40 | 37 | 37 | 34 |

□Base too small for reliability.

## In This Case, Bigger Is Better

Years of advertising research have shown that large-space ads attract more attention than small-space ads do, even though doubling the size of an ad doesn't double its readership. (That is, the relationship between size and readership tends to be positive but no. "linear.")

This study's results indicate that the same kind of pattern holds for editorial items (Table 25). Figures for the readership of the average editorial item would reflect the influence of size even more clearly if comic strips were excluded. Almost all comic strips occupy less than ten inches of space, but readership of the average comic (37%) is slightly higher than the average for all editorial items. (See "Amusements" below.) Category by category, item readership reaches successively higher levels the greater the space devoted to items.

Table 25

Percent of Editorial Items Read on Opened Pages, by Size of Item

| | Size of Item in Inches: | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 5-9+ | 10-19+ | 20 & Over |
| Average, all items | 32% | 33% | 42% |
| International news | 31% | 36% | 53% |
| National news | 33 | 35 | 43 |
| State, local news | 26 | 29 | 40 |
| Editorial page items | 21 | 31 | 35 |
| Sports | 22 | 25 | 36 |
| Amusements | 37 | 27 | 33 |
| Other general interest | 31 | 35 | 46 |

Yes, Pictures Do Increase Readership

The late twentieth century is often described as a visual age, and many newspapers appear to support this assessment. More than a third of the daily papers (35%) responding to a 1983 survey[1] indicated that they had increased their use of photographs within the past few years.

Item readership figures from this survey (Table 26) show that reported reading is higher for items that include illustrations. It should be noted that these items also tend to occupy more space. (In Table 26, the label "mixed use" denotes only comic strips and editorial cartoons.)

Table 26

Percent of Editorial Items Read on Opened Pages, by Graphic Treatment

| | Text Only | Text+ Illus. | Illus. Only | Mixed Use |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Average, all items | 31% | 42% | 43% | 37% |
| International news | 35% | 56% | 52% | □ |
| National news | 35 | 45 | □ | □ |
| State, local news | 28 | 43 | 48 | □ |
| Editorial page items | 29 | 32 | □ | 36% |
| Sports | 24 | 38 | 33 | □ |
| Amusements | 27 | 35 | □ | 37 |
| Other general interest | 31 | 43 | 44 | □ |

□Base too small for reliability.

[1] "Newspaper Inventory: Summary Tables and Findings (Weekday Editions) 1983," Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1983.

## Are Right-hand Pages Better Read?

Certain advertisers regularly ask for right-hand page positions because they believe that this gives their ads a better chance of being read, even though research indicates little or no advantage for right-hand pages.[1]

Overall figures on the reading of editorial content on right-hand and left-hand pages differ by only two percentage points (Table 27). This is well within the range of sampling error, but even if there is a real difference favoring right-hand pages, it may depend on other correlated variables. (For example, more than 97% of all unsigned editorials appear on left-hand pages.)

Table 27

Percent of Editorial Items Read on Opened Pages: Right- versus Left-hand Pages*

| | Right Hand | Left Hand |
|---|---|---|
| Average, all items | 34% | 32% |
| International news | 37% | 35% |
| National news | 36 | 34 |
| State, local news | 28 | 28 |
| Editorial page items | 30 | 31 |
| Sports | 25 | 26 |
| Amusements | 35 | 32 |
| Other general interest | 38 | 33 |

*Base on interior spreads only.

[1] See "Research Facts on Position, Timing and Creativity," Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1976.

Chapter Summary

The percentage of items read on opened pages is affected by newspaper-related factors as well as reader characteristics, and in some cases it is difficult to separate these two interrelated sources of variation.

Compared with thin newspapers, pages in fat papers have a somewhat smaller chance of being opened, but once readers of the latter turn to a page, they tend to read a higher percentage of the items on it. This may be because the larger newshole in these papers allows them to appeal to a wider range of special-interest readership segments, as well as to the mass audience for hard news.

Among the newspaper factors that tend to increase item readership are front-page position, a large amount of space, and the use of illustrations, but the intrinsic importance of an item's content in the eyes of editors may be more influential. That is, certain items can have one or more of these characteristics precisely <u>because</u> they are considered to have greater editorial importance. Items on the right-hand pages of interior spreads have little or no advantage over items on left-hand pages.

There are a few exceptions to these general patterns. For example, the average comic strip receives slightly better than average readership even though it is generally given little space.

# APPENDIX

Appendix Exhibit 1

Detailed Editorial Content Codes

NOTE: (I)--Items classified as international news
(N)--Items classified as national news
(L)--Items classified as state and local news

ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES, EVENTS, ISSUES

Economics, governmental and private actions, policies

U.S. National Government/Political actions relating to the economy (excluding taxes) (N)
State or local government/Political actions relating to the economy (excluding taxes) (L)
International, foreign nation economic actions (I)
Taxes: rates, policies at any level
Domestic, local business/corporate activities, stocks, etc.

Labor, unions, wage agreements, policies, strikes

U.S. National Government/Political actions, policies, bargaining (N)
State or local government/Political actions, policies, bargaining (L)
Other labor, union or wage issues, not elsewhere classified

Travel, transportation

U.S. National Government/Political actions, policies, programs (N)
State or local government/Political actions, policies, programs (L)
Other travel, transportation-related items, not elsewhere classified

Farm, agricultural sector (crops, prices, programs, etc.)

U.S. National Government/Political actions, policies, programs (N)
State or local government/Political actions, policies, programs (L)
Other farm, agriculture-related items

Environment, natural resources, population, energy, pollution

U.S. National Government/Political actions, policies, programs (N)
State or local government/Political actions, policies, programs (L)
Population trends, issues at any level
Energy problems, programs, resources at any level
Other environmental, resources, pollution issues

Appendix Exhibit 1 (continued, p. 2)

SCIENCE, INVENTIONS

U.S. National Government/Political actions, policies, programs (N)
Foreign or international science developments (I)
Other science and invention, not elsewhere classified

GOVERNMENTAL OR POLITICAL ACTIONS (INCLUDING COURTS)

Specific actions by U.S./foreign governments, leaders

U.S. international, bilateral or multilateral actions (I)
U.S. National Government/Political actions by President, Congress, Federal Courts, etc. (N)
State or local government/Political actions (L)
Foreign nations, international agency actions not involving the U.S. (I)

War, conflict, rebellion, defense issues

Problems, conflicts in the Middle East (I)
Problems, conflicts in Latin America (I)
War in Falkland Islands (I)
Other wars rebellions, violent civil strife
Nuclear armaments, missiles, strategies, arms limitation talks
Conventional armaments, defense policies, talks, strategies

HEALTH AND WELFARE, SOCIAL PROBLEMS

Health and safety

Health (diseases, treatments, medical advice)
Consumer safety

Welfare (including proverty, aging, dependency, child abuse)

U.S. National Government/Political actions, programs, issues (N)
State or local government/Political actions, programs, issues (L)
Other welfare-related items, not elsewhere classified

Social problems (including alcholism, drugs, pornography, etc.)

U.S. National Government/Political actions, proposals, campaigns (N)
State or local government/Political actions, proposals, campaigns (L)
Other social problems, not elsewhere classified

Appendix Exhibit 1 (continued, p. 3)

Race, Minorities, Civil Rights, Movements

U.S. National Government/Political acts relating to race, minorities, civil rights (N)
Other race, minority, civil rights items, not elsewhere classified
Protest movements pro/anti nuclear power
Other protest movements pro/anti abortion, ERA, morality, etc.

Education, school news, child care

U.S. National Government/Political actions, loans, grants, programs, federal policies, statistics, etc. (N)
State or local government/Political actions, budgets, programs, taxes, appointments, etc. (L)
Specific education, school news, not elsewhere classified
Child care, parenting (including advice columns)

Crime

U.S. National Government/Political crime controls, policies, programs (N)
State or local government/Political crime controls, policies, programs (L)
Juvenile crime, teenage delinquency
Hijacking, hostages, terrorism (U.S. or foreign acts)
Foreign--international locales of other specific crimes (I)
Other criminal acts, events, not elsewhere classified

SPORTS (news, photos, columns, box scores, etc.)

Professional sports, events
Other spectator sports
Participant sports

ARTS, AMUSEMENTS, GENERAL INTEREST

Arts and amusements

Cultural, arts events
Cultural, arts reviews
Radio-TV logs, daily schedules
Comic strips, features
Puzzles, games, horoscopes
Humor columns

Appendix Exhibit 1 (continued, p. 4)

Editorials, op-ed pages

Editorials, unsigned
Editorial cartoons
Letters to the editor
Political columns, commentaries

Other general interest

Weather
Food
Vacation, leisure, resorts and tours
Fashion, style
Home and garden-centered
(furnishing, decorating, entertaining)
Marriages, births, social news
News of entertainers, celebrities, gossip columns
Personal advice columns
Obituaries
Action line, consumer hotline, complaints column
Accidents, disasters, natural phenomena

ALL OTHER ITEMS, NOT ELSEWHERE CLASSIFIED

News summaries, news briefs
Index, table of contents
All other types of items, not elsewhere classified

Appendix Table 1

Content of Editorial Items, by Size of Item

| | 5-9+ Inches | 10-19+ Inches | 20+ Inches |
|---|---|---|---|
| Total Items | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |
| Economic news, actions & policies | 9.1% | 13.5% | 12.6% |
| Environment, resources, population, energy | 1.4 | 2.0 | 1.4 |
| Government actions (U.S. & foreign) | 6.0 | 9.4 | 5.3 |
| Wars, rebellions, defense activity | 2.7 | 4.7 | 5.7 |
| Crime | 6.4 | 7.0 | 3.6 |
| Professional sports | 9.4 | 11.0 | 14.7 |
| Other sports | 4.0 | 4.4 | 4.4 |
| Editorials, unsigned | 1.4 | 3.1 | 1.6 |
| Editorial cartoons | 0.6 | 2.2 | 0.9 |
| Other editorial page content | 1.4 | 3.3 | 9.6 |
| Education, child care | 3.6 | 4.3 | 4.3 |
| Cultural events, arts, reviews | 1.8 | 2.7 | 3.9 |
| Other amusements | 28.2 | 6.0 | 4.6 |
| Personal advice columns | 0.4 | 2.5 | 2.1 |
| Other general interest | 15.1 | 14.3 | 17.6 |
| Health, welfare, social issues | 3.1 | 4.4 | 3.8 |
| News summaries, briefs, index | 1.6 | 1.5 | 0.9 |
| All other content | 3.8 | 3.9 | 3.0 |
| International news items | 4.3% | 7.0% | 7.2% |
| National news items | 3.5 | 6.9 | 3.7 |
| State & local news items | 11.9 | 16.2 | 14.2 |

Appendix Table 2

Kinds of Newspaper Items "Usually Read."
by Race

| Editorial | White | Black |
|---|---|---|
| News about local community | 89% | 85% |
| News about economy: jobs, inflation, etc. | 85 | 91 |
| International or world news | 84 | 84 |
| News about President, Congress | 78 | 77 |
| News briefs, summary of news | 77 | 75 |
| News about local politics, gov't. | 74 | 75 |
| News about celebrities | 71 | 68 |
| TV program listings | 66 | 77 |
| Advice columns | 66 | 57 |
| Calendar of local events | 61 | 58 |
| Letters to the editor | 62 | 45 |
| Food pages | 58 | 67 |
| Editorials, editor's opinions | 59 | 49 |
| Comic strips, funnies | 58 | 50 |
| Obituaries | 55 | 34 |
| Sports news: local schools, etc. | 50 | 54 |
| Business & financial news | 50 | 47 |
| Sports news: professional teams | 47 | 58 |
| Political opinion columns | 48 | 38 |
| Book reviews | 29 | 25 |
| Crossword puzzle | 23 | 31 |
| **Advertising** | | |
| Supermarket ads | 62% | 74% |
| Store ads for clothing | 60 | 82 |
| Classified or want ads | 59 | 71 |
| Movie ads | 54 | 66 |

Base: Total newspaper readers=100%

Appendix Table 3

Kinds of Newspaper Items "Usually Read,"
by Household Income

| Editorial | $35,000 & Over | $25,000-$34,999 | $15,000-$24,999 | $10,000-$14,999 | Under $10,000 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| News about local community | 86% | 93% | 88% | 88% | 85% |
| News about economy: jobs, inflation, etc. | 88 | 88 | 88 | 84 | 81 |
| International or world news | 85 | 89 | 85 | 84 | 77 |
| News about President, Congress | 81 | 84 | 73 | 78 | 75 |
| News briefs, summary of news | 80 | 84 | 77 | 76 | 68 |
| News about local politics, gov't. | 76 | 80 | 71 | 69 | 69 |
| News about celebrities | 69 | 76 | 71 | 70 | 68 |
| TV program listings | 62 | 68 | 72 | 70 | 66 |
| Advice columns | 61 | 65 | 68 | 63 | 66 |
| Calendar of local events | 54 | 66 | 63 | 60 | 56 |
| Letters to the editor | 58 | 64 | 62 | 52 | 56 |
| Food pages | 49 | 59 | 62 | 55 | 62 |
| Editorials, editor's opinions | 56 | 64 | 56 | 53 | 50 |
| Comic strips, funnies | 53 | 58 | 58 | 63 | 57 |
| Obituaries | 43 | 54 | 52 | 58 | 57 |
| Sports news: local schools, etc. | 56 | 56 | 51 | 53 | 41 |
| Business & financial news | 64 | 55 | 45 | 48 | 31 |
| Sports news: professional teams | 58 | 52 | 51 | 47 | 38 |
| Political opinion columns | 48 | 49 | 47 | 46 | 39 |
| Book reviews | 37 | 31 | 27 | 27 | 22 |
| Crossword puzzle | 27 | 21 | 20 | 22 | 27 |
| **Advertising** | | | | | |
| Supermarket ads | 53% | 61% | 66% | 63% | 74% |
| Store ads for clothing | 59 | 65 | 62 | 58 | 59 |
| Classified or want ads | 55 | 67 | 62 | 65 | 58 |
| Movie ads | 57 | 60 | 59 | 53 | 45 |

Appendix Table 4

Kinds of Newspaper Items "Usually Read,"
by Education within Sex

| | Men | | Women | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Editorial | Some Coll+ | HS Grad or Less | Some Coll+ | HS Grad or Less |
| News about local community | 87% | 86% | 92% | 89% |
| News about economy: jobs, inflation, etc. | 91 | 87 | 87 | 81 |
| International or world news | 92 | 84 | 90 | 75 |
| News about President, Congress | 85 | 79 | 82 | 70 |
| News briefs, summary of news | 84 | 75 | 84 | 71 |
| News about local politics, gov't. | 81 | 73 | 78 | 68 |
| News about celebrities | 69 | 61 | 82 | 73 |
| TV program listings | 63 | 66 | 66 | 71 |
| Advice columns | 46 | 45 | 83 | 80 |
| Calendar of local events | 57 | 56 | 71 | 61 |
| Letters to the editor | 63 | 52 | 69 | 59 |
| Food pages | 27 | 39 | 81 | 81 |
| Editorials, editor's opinions | 61 | 56 | 66 | 53 |
| Comic strips, funnies | 59 | 61 | 56 | 54 |
| Obituaries | 38 | 51 | 51 | 63 |
| Sports news: local schools, etc. | 59 | 66 | 41 | 40 |
| Business & financial news | 67 | 54 | 47 | 37 |
| Sports news: professional teams | 71 | 70 | 32 | 28 |
| Political opinion columns | 55 | 50 | 53 | 38 |
| Book reviews | 33 | 16 | 28 | 26 |
| Crossword puzzle | 20 | 19 | 28 | 26 |
| **Advertising** | | | | |
| Supermarket ads | 36% | 52% | 77% | 82% |
| Store ads for clothing | 44 | 48 | 75 | 77 |
| Classified or want ads | 59 | 67 | 53 | 60 |
| Movie ads | 63 | 51 | 56 | 55 |

Base: Total newspaper readers=100%

Appendix Table 5

Interest in Sampled Editorial Items Among Yesterday Non-Readers*

| | Total Adults | Males | Females |
|---|---|---|---|
| Average for all editorial items | 44% | 46% | 42% |
| Economic news, actions, policies | 44% | 46% | 41% |
| Environment, resources, population, energy | 50 | 61 | 44 |
| Government actions (U.S. & foreign) | 43 | 40 | 45 |
| Wars, rebellions, defense activity | 57 | 55 | 59 |
| Crime | 58 | 56 | 60 |
| Professional sports | 29 | 50 | 14 |
| Other sports | 35 | 49 | 23 |
| Editorials, unsigned | 50 | 47 | 53 |
| Editorial cartoons | 45 | 46 | 44 |
| Other editorial page content | 47 | 46 | 47 |
| Education, child care | 45 | 43 | 46 |
| Cultural events, arts, reviews | 43 | 42 | 44 |
| Other amusements | 37 | 43 | 33 |
| Personal advice columns | 56 | 47 | 66 |
| Other general interest | 44 | 39 | 47 |
| Health, welfare, social issues | 61 | 59 | 62 |
| News summaries, briefs, index | 45 | 44 | 46 |
| All other content | 63 | 53 | 69 |
| International news items | 53% | 52% | 54% |
| National news items | 51 | 51 | 50 |
| State & local news items | 41 | 44 | 39 |

*Figures shown represent "very interested" plus "somewhat interested."

Appendix Table 6

Composition of Frequent Reader, Infrequent Reader and Non-Reader Groups

| | Frequent Readers† | Infrequent Readers‡ | Non-Readers |
|---|---|---|---|
| Total Adults | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| By Sex: Male | 48% | 43% | 55% |
| Female | 52 | 57 | 45 |
| By Age: | | | |
| 18-24 years | 13% | 26% | 23% |
| 25-34 years | 21 | 27 | 25 |
| 35-44 years | 16 | 19 | 11 |
| 45-54 years | 15 | 11 | 14 |
| 54-64 years | 15 | 7 | 9 |
| 65 years or older | 19 | 9 | 17 |
| By Education: | | | |
| College graduate | 20% | 12% | 8% |
| 1-3 years college | 22 | 23 | 15 |
| High school graduate | 38 | 40 | 35 |
| Some high school or less | 19 | 24 | 42 |
| By Household Income: | | | |
| $35,000 & over | 17% | 12% | 5% |
| $25,000-$34,999 | 20 | 15 | 10 |
| $15,000-$24,999 | 20 | 22 | 20 |
| $10,000-$14,999 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| Under $10,000 | 13 | 22 | 29 |
| By Locality Type. | | | |
| Central city | 30% | 33% | 28% |
| Suburb | 44 | 38 | 49 |
| Non-metropolitan | 26 | 29 | 23 |
| By Home Ownership: | | | |
| Own | 78% | NA 58% | NA |
| Rent | 22 | NA 41 | NA |

†Read four or five out of past five weekdays.
‡Read a daily or Sunday newspaper at least occasionally, but less than four of the past five weekdays.

Appendix Table 7

Composition of AM, PM and All-Day Newspaper Audiences

| | AM Morning | PM Evening | All-Day |
|---|---|---|---|
| Total readers | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| By Sex: Male | 49% | 47% | 53% |
| Female | 51 | 53 | 47 |
| By Age: | | | |
| 18-24 years | 15% | 15% | 7% |
| 25-34 years | 21 | 18 | 34 |
| 35-44 years | 15 | 16 | 21 |
| 45-64 years | 28 | 32 | 25 |
| 65 years or older | 21 | 18 | 11 |
| By Education: | | | |
| College graduate | 23% | 14% | 30% |
| 1-3 years college | 22 | 20 | 26 |
| High school graduate | 38 | 40 | 33 |
| Some high school or less | 17 | 25 | 11 |
| By Household Income: | | | |
| $35,000 & over | 18% | 13% | 22% |
| $25,000-$34,999 | 21 | 19 | 17 |
| $15,000-$24,999 | 17 | 21 | 29 |
| $10,000-$14,999 | 13 | 12 | 8 |
| Less than $10,000 | 14 | 15 | 6 |
| By Locality Type: | | | |
| SMSA central city | 35% | 20% | 55% |
| SMSA suburban | 48 | 41 | 38 |
| Non-metropolitan | 17 | 39 | 7 |
| Base: Qualified yesterday readers | | | |
| Unweighted: | (555) | (595) | (138) |

Appendix Table 8

Bases for All Newspaper Readers--Unweighted

| | Total Readers | Qualified Readers | Yesterday Non-Readers |
|---|---|---|---|
| All respondents | 1,803 | 1,288 | 515 |
| By Age: | | | |
| 18-24 years | 238 | 132 | 106 |
| 25-34 years | 404 | 255 | 149 |
| 35-44 years | 331 | 222 | 109 |
| 45-54 years | 249 | 197 | 52 |
| 55-64 years | 258 | 209 | 49 |
| 65 years or older | 310 | 260 | 50 |
| By Education: | | | |
| College graduate | 323 | 262 | 61 |
| 1-3 years college | 383 | 259 | 124 |
| High school graduate | 707 | 485 | 222 |
| Some high school or less | 375 | 267 | 108 |
| By Household Income: | | | |
| $35,000 & over | 291 | 221 | 70 |
| $25,000-$34,999 | 340 | 257 | 83 |
| $15,000-$24,999 | 375 | 256 | 119 |
| $10,000-$14,999 | 211 | 150 | 61 |
| Under $10,000 | 245 | 158 | 87 |
| By Locality Type: | | | |
| Central city | 536 | 381 | 155 |
| Suburb | 802 | 584 | 218 |
| Non-metropolitan | 465 | 323 | 142 |
| By Race: | | | |
| White | 1,615 | 1,172 | 443 |
| Black | 151 | 99 | 52 |
| By Region | | | |
| Northeast | 435 | 341 | 94 |
| North Central | 506 | 333 | 173 |
| South | 550 | 401 | 149 |
| West | 312 | 213 | 99 |